

Democrats continue to call for the sequester to be replaced with a balanced approach to deficits that restores fiscal discipline, preserves our ability to pay for our military readiness, and invests in a strong economy.

The sequester, on its own, is not a solution. It has been, however, Republican policy all along and is now in effect because they refuse to compromise in a bipartisan way to find a real solution.

If you go back to July of 2011 and look at the Republican offer of the Cut, Cap and Balance bill, you will see that sequestration is in there. It is the alternative that Republicans put forth as policy; 229 Republicans voted for that policy.

Well, they got what they wanted. On April 27, a report in *The Hill* said:

GOP leaders in the House said they have no plans to bring up broad legislation to replace sequestration, according to a leadership aide.

The men and women who are hard at work supporting our troops and protecting our Nation are set to be furloughed for 11 days this year—an unfair, unplanned, undeserved pay cut, while, frankly, the leadership of this House sits idly by and takes no action to replace the sequester.

The same goes for the other terrible effects sequestration could have: 70,000 eligible children kicked off Head Start; 10,000 teachers' jobs at risk; retirement disability claims delayed; 4 million fewer Meals on Wheels for seniors; 125,000 fewer rental assistance vouchers; 2,100 fewer food safety inspectors.

Surely, if those were on the floor for a vote, most of us would not vote for them; but that's what's happening as a result of the sequester.

We know, Mr. Speaker, what the Republican plan is for these defense cuts, to pass appropriation bills in the House that shift those cuts so that domestic programs, those education, Head Start, food safety that I've just mentioned, basic biomedical research, are cut more deeply than the parties agreed to in the Budget Control Act in 2011.

We also understand, Mr. Speaker, and everyone recognizes, that the domestic cuts Republicans want to impose, instead, couldn't even pass the House, let alone make it through the Senate or survive a certain veto.

So, again, Mr. Speaker, we have only one reasonable option before us, and that is to work together, to set our differences aside for the good of our country, and to achieve real compromise.

A big, balanced, bipartisan approach that replaces the entire sequester is the only way to protect our defense workers against these furloughs and end the uncertainty that they and their families are facing.

Let's have a vote, Mr. Speaker, on a balanced alternative, not another vote to repeal health care reform that's not going anywhere, not another vote to roll back the rights of workers, not another vote to strip away safety standards or environmental protections.

Let's stop wasting time and get to work on the most pressing challenge we face, and make the tough choices necessary to restore fiscal stability and invest in our economy and in our national security.

□ 1010

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS TOO LARGE AND HAS TOO MUCH CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I find it would be irresponsible if I didn't mention this. It sounds like the lightbulb has come on for my colleague from Maryland. He now says that we should replace the sequester. I only wish that that lightbulb had come on when the House passed under Republican leadership—twice—legislation in the 112th Congress to replace the sequester with responsible spending cuts. So it looks like here we are again.

The recent admission by the IRS that it used its considerable authority and resources to target certain Americans because of their political affiliation should serve as an urgent warning to all Americans: the Federal Government is getting too large and has too much control. The simple truth is that when the government expands, personal liberty contracts.

I found it both stunning and revealing when the former adviser to President Obama, David Axelrod, said this:

Part of being President is there's so much beneath you that you can't know because the government is so vast.

For a member of this President's inner circle to admit that the Federal Government is so massive that it is essentially not practical for the chief executive to hold it accountable or for the President to effectively manage it is simply stunning. It also begs the question, if it is no longer possible for the President of the United States to oversee all the Federal agencies assigned to him and to hold them accountable, then who is? Is anyone?

As if the IRS scandal wasn't bad enough, there are other troubling stories that have arisen in the last few weeks. The Associated Press has said that the administration monitored hundreds of private phone calls between reporters. Is this really freedom of the press? Then we find that talking points given to the administration to tell the American people what happened on that fateful night in Benghazi were twisted, cut, turned, and edited to the point that the truth wound up on the cutting room floor in the White House, or at the State Department, or at the CIA, or at the Department of Defense. Actually, we don't even really know. But we're going to find out.

But we do know one very troubling thing: the Federal Government, with the IRS leading the way, is about to become exponentially larger and more

powerful because it's about to get into the health care business. ObamaCare will be fully implemented by next January. And, according to the Treasury Department's inspector general, the new health care law is the largest set of new tax law changes in 20 years.

The IRS will be hiring more bureaucrats to make sure Americans comply with these new laws and to oversee the flood of new personal information the Federal Government will be collecting on the American people. For example, under ObamaCare, the Federal Government will require insurance companies to report to the IRS the name, the address, the identification number, and type of policy purchased by every customer. And, if that weren't enough, the IRS will also require insurance companies to detail whether or not individuals purchased "government-approved health care" to ensure compliance with ObamaCare's individual mandate.

And, just yesterday, Lois Lerner, head of the IRS' Exempt Organizations Division, announced that she would be invoking the Fifth Amendment to protect herself from self-incrimination.

The truth is that our Federal Government is too big, too intrusive, and it's seeping into every aspect of our lives. It's taking away personal freedoms and collecting personal data. It has shown it can be manipulated to punish fellow Americans for their political beliefs, all at the expense of the American taxpayer.

And let me be clear: I'm not a no-regulation guy. We need commonsense regulations to ensure that our food is safe, our air and water are clean, our transportation system and infrastructure are sound, and that our financial transactions are secure, among other things. However, this administration has issued more than 10,000 regulations to date, including 106 major new regulations imposing \$46 billion in additional costs that are being paid for by the American people. This means more rules, more bureaucrats, bigger government, and less freedom.

Most troubling to me is that we were founded as a constitutional Republic, governed by the rule of law. But there are those in Washington who think we should be a Nation governed by the law of rules, where the President and his bureaucratic agencies make up the rules. This represents a fundamental break from our history and traditions dating back to our Founding Fathers. Our Founders placed their trust in the American people to elect their representatives to make the laws necessary to allow Americans to prosper.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the American people to consider America's government is getting too big and too out of control.

As members of the House, we serve at the pleasure of those we represent. The tens of thousands of bureaucrats implementing the more than 10,000 new regulations are accountable to no one, let alone the American people.

Those that will be making health care decisions for the American people on the Independent Payment Advisory Board, IPAB, will never appear on a ballot. The American people will never be able to hire or fire those making medical decisions on their behalf. Is that fair? Is that democratic? Is that what America is all about?

Mr. Speaker, this need not be a partisan issue. The American people deserve an effective, efficient Federal Government—a government that works for them and not the other way around.

I fear that as the government continues to grow and Obamacare is fully implemented, the consequences of transferring so much power, national treasure, and control to the Federal Government will be felt widely, personally, and painfully.

In the meantime, it is the duty of this Congress to vigorously oversee the Federal agencies, and root out those political appointees and bureaucrats who've abused their positions and violated the trust of the American people.

SAFETY NEEDS OF CHILDREN AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the horrific tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, where 20 children were murdered, the issue of keeping children safe has been on the minds of all Americans. Since this tragedy occurred in a school, districts and States have, understandably, focused conversations on preventing and responding to violent crime that occurs in the school building itself. However, protecting children will require much more than preventing an outside intruder from committing acts of violence against students or a good emergency response plan to deal with an event. We need to recognize that violence—or the fear of violence—against children does not begin or end at the schoolhouse door. That's why I've devoted this month to introduce legislation that focuses on the safety needs of children as a national priority.

First, I introduced legislation to establish the minimum safety standards to prevent abusive seclusion and restraint practices in schools across the country. The Keeping All Students Safe Act would protect schoolchildren from inappropriate uses of seclusion and restraints and provide school personnel with the necessary tools, training, and support to ensure the safety of all students and school personnel. These practices are, at best, cruel and, at worst, deadly. They continue to be used on children across the country.

In Indiana, an 8-year-old girl with Down syndrome had her shoes duct-taped painfully to her ankles because she refused to put her shoes on. In North Carolina, a 14-year-old boy with a traumatic brain injury was confined inside a cardboard box as a form of timeout. In some cases, children have even died from improper restraints and

seclusion. My bill also would stop these abusive practices, but safety shouldn't stop at the schoolhouse door.

Investigations conducted by the Government Accountability Office, at my request, in 2007 and 2008 found that private and public residential programs, including therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness camps, boot camps, and behavior modification facilities are not always run in a safe manner. Recently, the Tampa Bay Times confirmed that problems of abuse and neglect continue, with stories of children being bruised, bloodied, and choked into unconsciousness at these programs, all in the name of discipline. More horrific stories of child abuse, including deaths in some cases, have been documented in seven States' residential programs in just the past 2 years.

Last week, I introduced the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act, a bill that would set basic health and safety standards the State would need to adopt to enforce and protect teens from physical, mental, and sexual abuse in these programs. It would also create easily accessible information for parents about the safety records of the programs so that parents can make sound decisions about if they want to send their child there or not.

No one disputes that our schools and residential programs must be a safe place for children where they can focus on learning and improving their lives, not fearing for their lives. Though some States have made progress developing policies to protect children from acts of violence, abuse, and neglect, a patchwork of protections, riddled with holes, is not acceptable when it comes to our Nation's children. We cannot sit idly by as incidents of children being abused or killed continues to occur.

Today, I'm introducing legislation that will prevent registered sex offenders and criminals convicted of crimes against children from working at schools. The Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act would require public schools to conduct comprehensive background checks on any employee, using State criminal and child abuse registries and the FBI's fingerprint database. It would also prohibit school districts from hiring or retaining anyone who has been convicted of certain violent crimes, including crimes against children, crimes involving rape or sexual assault, and child pornography.

□ 1020

Mr. Speaker, keeping our children safe isn't a partisan issue; it's a moral obligation. This Congress must do more to protect our children. One way Congress can immediately help to ensure that students and schools have the support needed to address all aspects of violence is through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Through a bipartisan rewrite of the Nation's education law, we can ensure that schools and students

have the necessary support to provide key nonacademic services essential for students to succeed in a safe and healthy learning environment.

In the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Democrats will be fighting for these critical services, including other measures to promote safety, such as school services for violence prevention activities, bullying and harassment prevention, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, and programs to prepare for and respond to natural disasters and emergencies in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, on my last point, my thoughts continue to be with the victims and families of all those who have suffered and continue to suffer from the terrible tragedy that took place in Oklahoma earlier this week. We are just amazed and honor all of the efforts of school staff, teachers, and parents trying to get children out of harm's way, and our heart goes out to those who were unsuccessful. I hope that Congress can support these communities in healing in every possible way. As always, keeping kids safe requires the coordinated efforts of children, principals, superintendents, community partners, and parents.

And protecting children from violence and freeing students to learn and better their lives means ensuring that states, districts, schools and communities have the resources and supports needed to implement evidence-based approaches that are tailored to the unique needs of children in that area.

My bills are only part of the solution, but an important step forward.

We owe it to parents and to the children and to the school officials who follow the rules to consider these bills.

We also owe it to them to send a strong message that people who abuse children or do not do their jobs to keep children safe will face serious consequences.

I hope that this Congress will be able to take an even more comprehensive approach to protect children in our schools and residential programs, and I urge all of my colleagues to support these bills.

NORTHERN ROUTE APPROVAL ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, this week, the House of Representatives is going to vote on a very important piece of legislation that should be unnecessary.

Due to the President's objection—at the insistence of Hollywood and the EPA—a critical piece of North America's energy security puzzle languishes on a desk in the Oval Office while thousands of unemployed workers collect government benefits instead of a paycheck. That is why I cosponsored and am doing all I can to pass H.R. 3, the Keystone pipeline Northern Route Approval Act, a bill that renders the northern route of the pipeline approved for construction, eliminating the need for a Presidential permit.